

*\$ AF  
ZFW*



Docket No.: SHG-0047  
(PATENT)

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

In re Patent Application of:  
Jun Akikusa et al.

Confirmation No.: 8796

Application No.: 09/891,501

Art Unit: 1745

Filed: June 27, 2001

Examiner: R. Alejandro

For: SOLID OXIDE FUEL CELL

**APPEAL BRIEF**

MS Appeal Brief - Patents  
Commissioner for Patents  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

As required under 37 C.F.R. §1.192(a), this brief is filed within the statutory term of the Notice of Appeal filed in this case on June 28, 2005, and is in furtherance of said Notice of Appeal.

The fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.17(c), and any required petition for extension of time for filing this brief and fees therefor, are dealt with in the accompanying TRANSMITTAL OF APPEAL BRIEF.

This brief contains items under the following headings as required by 37 C.F.R. §1.192 and M.P.E.P. §1206:

- I. Real Party In Interest
- II. Related Appeals and Interferences
- III. Status of Claims
- IV. Status of Amendments
- V. Summary of Invention
- VI. Issues
- VII. Arguments
- VIII. Claims Involved in the Appeal
- IX. Evidence

09/29/2005 SZEWIDIE1 00000130 180013 09891501

01 FC:1402 500.00 DA

X. Related Proceedings  
Appendix A Claims

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest for this appeal is Mitsubishi Materials Corporation of Tokyo, Japan. An assignment of all rights in the present application to Mitsubishi Materials Corporation was executed by the inventors and recorded by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office at **Reel 012341, Frame 0514.**

II. RELATED APPEALS, INTERFERENCES, AND JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

There are no other appeals, interferences, or judicial proceedings which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in this appeal.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

A. Total Number of Claims in Application

There are 6 claims pending in this application.

B. Current Status of Claims

1. Claims canceled: claim 2
2. Claims withdrawn from consideration but not canceled: None
3. Claims pending: claims 1 and 3-6
4. Claims allowed: None
5. Claims rejected: claims 1 and 3-6

C. Claims On Appeal

The claims on appeal are claims 1 and 3-6

#### IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

Applicant filed an Amendment in response to the first Office Action (mailed February 20, 2003) on May 19, 2003, following the filing of the application on June 27, 2001. The Examiner responded to the Amendment with a Final Office Action mailed June 23, 2003. Applicant filed a Response to the Final Office Action on September 23, 2003, and the Examiner responded in an Advisory Action mailed October 9, 2003. Applicant filed a second Response to the Final Office Action on November 18, 2003, and the Examiner responded with a second Advisory Action mailed December 16, 2003. In response to the second Advisory Action, Applicant filed a Request for Continued Examination and Preliminary Amendment on May 17, 2004. The Examiner then issued a non-final Office Action mailed on July 7, 2004 to which a Response was filed on January 7, 2005. After reviewing the Response filed on January 7, 2005, the Examiner issued a Final Office Action on April 1, 2005, which is the subject of this Appeal.

Accordingly, the claims enclosed herein in Appendix A incorporate all amendments to claims 1 and 3-6.

#### V. SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a solid oxide fuel cell comprising an air electrode layer, a fuel electrode layer, and a solid electrolyte layer interposed between the air electrode layer and the fuel electrode layer, wherein the solid electrolyte layer comprises a first electrolyte layer which is made of a lanthanide-gallate oxide with a first ionic transference number and a first total electric conductivity, and a second electrolyte layer which is made of a lanthanide-gallate oxide with a second ionic transference number smaller than the first ionic transference number and a second total electric conductivity larger than the first total electric conductivity; the air electrode layer is laminated onto one side of the solid electrolyte layer; and the fuel electrode layer is laminated onto the other side of the solid electrolyte layer (*see page 4, lines 12-21, of the specification*).

In the solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention, the solid electrolyte layer made of a lanthanide-gallate oxide has a total electric conductivity larger than that of the conventional solid electrolyte layer made of YSZ. Therefore, the operating temperatures of the claimed solid oxide fuel cell can be lower than conventional fuel cells (*see page 4, lines 22-25, of the specification*).

Further, by positioning the first electrolyte layer between the second electrolyte layer and the air electrode layer and having the first electrolyte layer (containing a small amount of Co) possess a relatively high ionic transference number, the ionic conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer can be remarkably improved, and the efficiency of the solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention can be improved (*see page 4, line 26, to page 5, line 10 of the specification*).

The first and second electrolyte layers are made of a compound represented by general formula (1):  $\text{Ln}_{1-a}\text{A}_a\text{Ga}_{1-(b+c)}\text{B}_b\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ , wherein Ln is lanthanide rare earth metals; wherein A is one or more kinds of Sr, Ca, and Ba; B is one or more kinds of Mg, Al, and In; a is in the range from 0.05 to 0.3; b is in the range from 0 to 0.3; c is in the range from 0 to 0.2; and (b+c) is in the range from 0.025 to 0.3 (*see page 5, lines 11-24 of the specification*).

The amount of Co in said first electrolyte layer is  $0\% \leq \text{Co} \leq 80\%$  with respect to an amount of Co in said second electrolyte layer to ensure that the first electrolyte layer having the ionic conductivity larger than that of the second electrolyte layer can be easily formed (*see page 5, lines 25-32 of the specification*).

Finally, the thickness of the second electrolyte layer is larger than a thickness of said first electrolyte layer to prevent the decrease of the total electrical conductivity of the first electrolyte layer and to optimize the total electrical conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer (*see page 6, lines 6-21 of the specification*).

## VI. ISSUES - GROUNDS OF REJECTION

1. Whether claims 1 and 3-6 can be rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, on the ground that the introduction of the phrase " $0\% \leq \text{Co} \leq 80\%$ " constitutes new matter.
2. Whether claims 1 and 3-6 can be rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over DE 19949431.
3. Whether the Amendment filed June 14, 2004 can be objected under 35 U.S.C. §132 on the ground that the introduction of the phrase " $0\% \leq \text{Co} \leq 80\%$ " constitutes new matter.

4. Whether claims 1, 3, 4 and 6 can be rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-3 of U.S. Patent 6,287,716.

## VII. ARGUMENT

In the Office Action of April 1, 2005, the following rejections were presented by the Examiner:

- (i) 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph

The Examiner rejected claims 1 and 3-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, on the ground that the introduction of the phrase “ $0\% \leq Co \leq 80\%$ ” constitutes new matter.

The Office Action alleges that there is no support in the specification for the phrase “ $0\% \leq Co \leq 80\%$ ”. In response to such a rejection, Applicant submitted a certified copy of the priority document and the verified English translation thereof which indicates that the phrase “ $0\% \leq Co \leq 80\%$ ” is properly supported in the priority document disclosure. The Examiner was unpersuaded by such evidence. The Examiner was also unpersuaded by Applicant’s arguments and references to the specification in the Response dated January 7, 2005. However, in the personal interview dated May 23, 2005, the Examiner agreed to take the foreign priority document to a PTO translator so as to clarify the specific translation of the relevant passage in the priority document as it relates to the phrase “ $0\% \leq Co \leq 80\%$ ”. The Examiner indicated during the interview that the new matter rejection will be withdrawn if the PTO translator confirms that the specific Japanese phrase “80%以下” means “80% or less”

After a review by a PTO translator, the Examiner contacted the Applicant’s Attorney and confirmed that the PTO translator agreed that the specific Japanese phrase “80%以下” means “80% or less”. Thus, the Examiner communicated to the Applicant during the telephone interview that this new matter rejection will be withdrawn.

In further support of the Applicant’s position, Applicant has submitted herewith a Japanese to English online dictionary which also indicates that the phrase “80%以下” means “up

to 80%", and "not exceeding 80%".

Thus, in view of the confirmation by the PTO translator and Applicant's current and previously submitted arguments and evidence, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

(ii) 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

None

(iii) 35 U.S.C. §102

None

(iv) 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner rejected claims 1 and 3-6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Hashimoto et al. (DE 19949431) (German counterpart patent to U.S. Patent 6,287,716).

Under U.S. practice, to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. Here, in this case, DE 19949431, fails to teach or suggest the solid electrolyte layer as defined in the claims. Since DE 19949431 is a German counterpart patent to U.S. Patent 6,287,716, Applicant has cited the English language passages and drawings of U.S. Patent 6,287,716 (herewinafter, Hashimoto '716) which are equivalent to that of DE 19949431 for the convenience of the Examiner and Appeal Board.

Claim 1 of the present invention recites a solid oxide fuel cell comprising an air electrode layer, a fuel electrode layer, and a solid electrolyte layer interposed between said air electrode layer and said fuel electrode layer, *wherein said solid electrolyte layer comprises a*

*first electrolyte layer which is made of a lanthanide-gallate oxide and has a first ionic transference number and a first total electric conductivity, and a second electrolyte layer which is made of a lanthanide-gallate oxide and has a second ionic transference number smaller than said first ionic transference number and a second total electric conductivity larger than said first total electric conductivity; said air electrode layer is laminated onto one side of said solid electrolyte layer; said fuel electrode layer is laminated onto the other side of said solid electrolyte layer; said first and second electrolyte layers are made of a compound represented by general formula (1):  $\text{Ln}_{1-a}\text{A}_a\text{Ga}_{1-(b+c)}\text{B}_b\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ , wherein Ln is lanthanide rare earth metals; wherein A is one or more kinds of Sr, Ca, and Ba; B is one or more kinds of Mg, Al, and In; a is in the range from 0.05 to 0.3; b is in the range from 0 to 0.3; c is in the range from 0 to 0.2; and (b+c) is in the range from 0.025 to 0.3; an amount of Co in said first electrolyte layer is  $0\% \leq \text{Co} \leq 80\%$  with respect to an amount of Co in said second electrolyte layer; and a thickness of said second electrolyte layer is larger than a thickness of said first electrolyte layer.*

One of the objectives of the present invention is to “provide a solid oxide fuel cell which has an improved efficiency achieved by a solid electrolyte layer having improved ionic conductivity, while maintaining the partition wall function.” (see page 4, lines 7-10, of the specification). In order to effectively achieve this improved efficiency, it is necessary to prevent electrons, discharged in the fuel electrode by oxide ions reacting with the fuel, from returning into the air electrode layer through the solid electrolyte layer, and to catch these electrons securely in the fuel electrode (see page 3, lines 22-32, of the specification). The present invention accomplishes this by dividing the aforementioned solid electrolyte layer into two layers, a first electrolyte layer 16a and a second electrolyte layer 16b, each having differing amount of Co. It is the composition and relational size of these two layers that represents the novelty and unobviousness of the present invention. As stated on page 10, lines 10-15 of the specification:

*[T]he amount of Co in the first electrolyte layer 16a is less than that in the second electrolyte layer 16b. The ionic transference number of the first electrolyte layer 16a is larger than that of the second electrolyte layer 16b. Moreover, the electric conductivity of the second electrolyte layer 16b is larger than that of the first electrolyte layer 16a.*

By arranging first electrolyte layer 16a and second electrolyte 16b having the described compositions in this manner, electrons move in the solid electrolyte layer toward and

into the fuel electrode layer and, once they are discharged in the fuel electrode by oxide ions reacting with the fuel, are prevented from returning into the air electrode layer (see page 6, lines 13-22 of the specification). As a result, the efficiency of the solid oxide fuel cell is improved.

DE 19949431 discloses a solid oxide fuel cell having a composition gradient between the electrode and the electrolyte. However, DE 19949431 fail to teach, disclose or suggest a need for preventing electrons, discharged in the fuel electrode, from returning into the air electrode; let alone a method for doing so. In fact, the levels of Co used in the solid electrolyte layer disclosed in DE 19949431 are opposite from those recited in claim 1. As demonstrated in DE 19949431 (see Figs. 4A-4B and 6A-6B of Hashimoto et al. '716), the amount of Co present in each layer of the solid fuel cell gradually decreases from the air electrode layer to the electrolyte layer. In other words, the amount of Co present in the electrolyte layer is less than the amount present in the intermediate layer, and the amount of Co present in the intermediate layer is less than the amount present in the air electrode layer. As discussed above, this is opposite from the present invention. DE 19949431, therefore, cannot anticipate the Co limitations recited for the first and second electrolyte layers of claim 1.

Stated differently, the solid oxide fuel cell of claim 1 has the following two structures:

Layer structures of claim 1		Layer structure of Hashimoto et al. '716
First layer structure	Second layer structure	
Fuel electrode layer	Fuel electrode layer	Fuel electrode layer
First electrolyte layer (Co: small amount)	Second electrolyte layer (Co: large amount)	Electrolyte layer (Co: small amount)
Second electrolyte layer (Co: large amount)	First electrolyte layer (Co: small amount)	Intermediate layer (Co: intermediate amount)
Air electrode layer	Air electrode layer	Air electrode layer (Co: large amount)

The Co amount gradually increases in the order of the electrolyte layer, the intermediate layer, and the air electrode layer in DE 19949431. However, the Co amount gradually decreases in the order of the second electrolyte layer and the first electrolyte layer in the solid oxide fuel cell having the second layer structure of the present invention. In the solid

oxide fuel cell having the first layer structure of the present invention, the Co amount gradually increases in the order of the first electrolyte layer and the second electrolyte layer (See also page 6, lines 12-26 of the specification).

The Examiner has argued that in this case, the intermediate layer of DE 19949431 serves as an electrolyte layer since the intermediate layer of DE 19949431 is made of the same composition and thus, necessarily exhibits the same property (i.e. electrolytic behavior) as the electrolytic layer of the present invention. However, Applicant strongly disagrees with the Examiner in this regard.

The intermediate layer of DE 19949431 does not serve as an electrolytic layer. Instead, the intermediate layer is part of the cathode because it is used to ionize oxygen (see Figures 2a and 2b of Hashimoto et al. '716). Thus, the intermediate layer of DE 19949431 must be permeable to gas. As stated in column 6, line 58, to column 7, line 6, of Hashimoto et al. '716, *if an aggregate (i.e. intermediate layer) of electron and ion mixed conductor is interposed between the air electrode and the electrolyte, the aggregate exhibits two characteristics of oxide ion conductivity, required to ionize oxygen, and electron conductivity. With this aggregate only, oxygen molecules in the air are ionized to be oxide ions. In this case, the ionization of oxygen takes place in a two-phase interface of the aggregate and air, namely, in a two-dimensional area of the external surface of the aggregate as shown in FIG. 2B.* In other words, this arrangement dramatically expands the (reaction) area in which oxygen is ionized, making the polarization occur less, and increasing cell efficiency. With the aggregate only, however, conduction of electrons to an external terminal is insufficient. An air electrode material of an electron conductor is needed from the standpoint of the catalytic activity to the electrode reaction.

In contrast to the intermediate layer of DE 19949431, the solid electrolyte layer of the present invention is impermeable to gases such as oxygen. As stated on page 2, lines 4-18, of the specification,

*"[I]n these solid oxide fuel cells, oxygen is supplied to the air electrode layer side, and fuel gas, such as H<sub>2</sub> and CO, is supplied to the fuel electrode layer side. The air electrode layer 2 and the fuel electrode layer 4 are made of a porous material so as to allow gases to diffuse to the interface between the solid electrolyte layer 3 and the air electrode layer 2 or the fuel electrode layer 4. Oxygen supplied to the air electrode layer side passes through pores of the air electrode layer 2, and reaches in the vicinity of the interface between the air*

*electrode layer 2 and the solid electrolyte layer 3. Then, the oxygen receives electrons from the air electrode layer 2, to be ionized, ( $O^{2-}$ ). The oxide ions diffuse toward the fuel electrode layer 4 through the solid electrolyte layer 3. When the oxide ions reach in the vicinity of the interface between the solid electrolyte layer 3 and the fuel electrode layer 4, the oxide ions react with the fuel gas, generate a reaction product, such as  $H_2O$  and  $CO_2$ , and discharge electrons to the fuel electrode layer 4.*

*The solid electrolyte layer 3 functions as a partition wall to prevent direct contact between the fuel gas and air, while being a medium for conducting oxide ions. Therefore, the solid electrolyte layer 3 must have gas impermeability and a high density.”*

Thus, it is clear from the teachings of DE 19949431 and the present specification that the intermediate layer of DE 19949431 does not possess the electrolytic properties of the solid electrolyte layer (i.e. first and second electrolyte layers) of the present invention.

Further, there is no suggestion or motivation in DE 19949431 or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the intermediate layer of DE 19949431 to be gas impermeable. Under U.S. case law, an obviousness rejection can only be established if there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation found in the references or in the art to combine or modify the cited references. If a proposed modification would render the prior art invention unsatisfactory for its intended purpose, then there is no suggestion or motivation to make the proposed modification. *In re Gordon*, 733 F.2d 900, 221 USPQ 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1984). Since the modification of the intermediate layer of DE 19949431 to be gas impermeable would render it unsatisfactory for its intended purpose (i.e. *expanding the reaction area in which oxygen is ionized*), there can be no suggestion or motivation, either in DE 19949431 or in the prior art, to modify the intermediate layer of DE 19949431 to arrive at the solid electrolyte layer of the present invention.

Thus, for at least the reasons set forth above, claim 1 is allowable, and the rejection should be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Dependent claims 3-6 depending from claim 1 are also allowable for the reasons above. Moreover, these claims are further distinguished by the materials recited therein, particularly within the claimed combination. Withdrawal of the §103 rejection is therefore respectfully solicited.

(v) Other

The Examiner objected to the Amendment filed June 14, 2004 under 35 U.S.C. §132 on the ground that the introduction of the phrase “ $0\% \leq Co \leq 80\%$ ” constitutes new matter.

Applicant believes that the above presented arguments in Section VII(i) are also relevant for this rejection. Thus, in view of the above presented arguments in Section VII(i), withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4 and 6 under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-3 of U.S. Patent 6,287,716.

Under U.S. case law, a double patenting rejection of the obviousness-type is “*analogous to [a failure to meet] the nonobviousness requirement of 35 U.S.C. § 103*”. *In re Braithwaite*, 379 F.2d 594, 154 U.S.P.Q. 29 (CCPA 1967). Therefore, any analysis employed in an obviousness-type double patenting rejection parallels the guidelines for analysis of a 35 U.S.C. § 103. *In re Braat*, 937 F.2d 589, 19 U.S.P.Q.2d 1289 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

Thus, to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, claims 1-3 of U.S. Patent 6,287,716 must teach or suggest the invention as a whole, including all the limitations of the claims. As stated earlier, U.S. Patent 6,287,716 is a U.S. counterpart patent to DE 19949431. Thus, for the same reasons as noted in Section VII(iv), U.S. Patent 6,287,716 fails to teach or suggest the solid electrolyte layer as defined in the claims. Further, for also the same reasons as noted in Section VII(iv), there is no suggestion or motivation in U.S. Patent 6,287,716 or in the prior art to modify the intermediate layer of U.S. Patent 6,287,716 to arrive at the solid electrolyte layer of the present invention.

Hence, claim 1 is allowable, and the rejection should be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Dependent claims 3-6 depending from claim 1 are also allowable for the reasons above. Moreover, these claims are further distinguished by the materials recited therein, particularly within the claimed combination. Withdrawal of the §103 rejection is therefore respectfully solicited.

### VIII. CLAIMS INVOLVED IN THE APPEAL

A copy of the claims involved in the present appeal is attached hereto as Appendix A.

### IX. EVIDENCE

1. The verified English translation of the Priority Document (Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-193750; Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. 2002-15756), is submitted herewith which was filed with the Applicant's Response dated January 5, 2005 and considered by the Examiner.

2. The Rule 1.132 Declaration from the inventor, Mr. Jun Akisusa, is submitted herewith which was filed with the Applicant's Preliminary Amendment dated May 17, 2004 and considered by the Examiner.

3. A copy of a Japanese to English online dictionary definition is submitted herewith which indicates that the phrase “80%以下” means “up to 80%”, and “not exceeding 80%”.

### X. RELATED PROCEEDINGS

No related proceedings are referenced in II. above. Thus, no copies of decisions in related proceedings are provided.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 18-0013, under Order No. SHG-0047 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Dated: September 28, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

By   
David T. Nikaido  
Registration No.: 22,663

Lee Cheng  
Registration No.: 40,949  
RADER, FISHMAN & GRAUER PLLC  
1233 20th Street, N.W.  
Suite 501  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 955-3750  
Attorneys for Applicant

**APPENDIX A****Claims Involved in the Appeal of Application Serial No. 09/891,501**

1. (Previously Presented) A solid oxide fuel cell comprising an air electrode layer, a fuel electrode layer, and a solid electrolyte layer interposed between said air electrode layer and said fuel electrode layer, wherein

said solid electrolyte layer comprises a first electrolyte layer which is made of a lanthanide-gallate oxide and has a first ionic transference number and a first total electric conductivity, and a second electrolyte layer which is made of a lanthanide-gallate oxide and has a second ionic transference number smaller than said first ionic transference number and a second total electric conductivity larger than said first total electric conductivity;

said air electrode layer is laminated onto one side of said solid electrolyte layer; said fuel electrode layer is laminated onto the other side of said solid electrolyte layer;

said first and second electrolyte layers are made of a compound represented by general formula (1):  $\text{Ln}_{1-a}\text{A}_a\text{Ga}_{1-(b+c)}\text{B}_b\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ , wherein Ln is lanthanide rare earth metals; wherein A is one or more kinds of Sr, Ca, and Ba; B is one or more kinds of Mg, Al, and In; a is in the range from 0.05 to 0.3; b is in the range from 0 to 0.3; c is in the range from 0 to 0.2; and (b+c) is in the range from 0.025 to 0.3;

an amount of Co in said first electrolyte layer is  $0\% \leq \text{Co} \leq 80\%$  with respect to an amount of Co in said second electrolyte layer; and

a thickness of said second electrolyte layer is larger than a thickness of said first electrolyte layer.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Original) A solid oxide fuel cell according to Claim 1 wherein said lanthanide-gallate oxide is a lanthanum-gallate oxide.

4. (Previously Presented) A solid oxide fuel cell according to Claim 3 wherein:

said lanthanum-gallate oxide is a compound represented by general formula (1):  $\text{La}_1\text{A}_a\text{Ga}_{1-(b+c)}\text{B}_b\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ , wherein A is one or more kinds of Sr, Ca, and Ba; B is one or more kinds of Mg, Al, and In; a is in the range from 0.05 to 0.3; b is in the range from 0 to 0.3; c is in the range from 0 to 0.2; and (b+c) is in the range from 0.025 to 0.3; and

an amount of Co in said first electrolyte layer is 0 or 80 % less than an amount of Co in said second electrolyte layer.

5. (Original) A solid oxide fuel cell according to Claim 4, wherein
  - a thickness of said solid electrolyte layer comprising said first and second electrolyte layers is in a range from 1 to 500  $\mu\text{m}$ ; and
  - a percentage of said thickness of said first electrolyte layer with respect to said thickness of said solid electrolyte layer is in a range from 1 to 20%.

6. (Original) A solid oxide fuel cell according to Claim 4, wherein said amount of Co decreases gradually from said second electrolyte layer to said first electrolyte layer in the vicinity of the interface between said first electrolyte layer and said second electrolyte layer.



## DECLARATION

I, Akiko Shishido, of SHIGA INTERNATIONAL PATENT OFFICE, 2-3-1, Yaesu, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan, understand both English and Japanese, am the translator of the English document attached, and do hereby declare and state that the attached English document contains an accurate translation of the official certified copy of Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-193750 that all statements made herein are true to the best of my knowledge.

Declared in Tokyo, Japan

This 19th day of November, 2004

*Akiko Shishido*

Akiko Shishido

PATENT OFFICE  
JAPANESE GOVERNMENT

This is to certify that the annexed is a true copy of the following application as filed with this office.

Date of Application : June 28, 2000

Application Number : Patent Application No. 2000-193750

Applicant(s) : MITSUBISHI MATERIALS CORPORATION

Dated June 28, 2001

Commissioner, Japan Patent Office Kozo Oikawa

No.2001-3060986

(Title of the Document) Patent Application  
(Patent) 2000-193750 (Date of Receipt) 2000.6.28

---

(Title of the Document) Patent Application  
(Docket Number) P00MB040J  
(Filing Date) June 28, 2000  
(Destination) Commissioner, Japan Patent Office  
(International Classification) H01M 8/02  
H01M 4/86  
(Number of Claims) 4  
(Inventor)  
(Address) c/o MITSUBISHI MATERIALS CORPORATION, Central Research Institute, 297, Kitabukuro-cho 1-chome, Omiya-shi, Saitama-ken  
(Name) Jun AKIKUSA  
(Inventor)  
(Address) c/o MITSUBISHI MATERIALS CORPORATION, Central Research Institute, 297, Kitabukuro-cho 1-chome, Omiya-shi, Saitama-ken  
(Name) Yoshitaka TAMOU  
(Applicant for Patent)  
(Identification Number) 000006264  
(Name) MITSUBISHI MATERIALS CORPORATION  
(Agent)  
(Identification Number) 100085372  
(Patent Attorney)  
(Name) Masayoshi SUDA  
(Official Fees)  
(Prepayment Docket Number) 003285  
(Amount of Payment) 21000  
(List of Documents Submitted)  
(Item) Specification 1  
(Item) Drawing 1  
(Item) Abstract 1

(Title of the Document) Patent Application  
(Patent) 2000-193750

(Date of Receipt) 2000.6.28

---

(Necessity of Proof) Yes

Information on Applicant

Identification Number (000006264)

1. Renewal Date April 10, 1992  
(Reason) Change of Address  
Address 5-1, Ote-machi 1-chome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo  
Name MITSUBISHI MATERIALS CORPORATION

【Document Name】 Specification

【Title of the Invention】 Solid oxide fuel cell

【Range of claims】

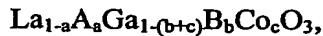
【Claim 1】 A solid oxide fuel cell (11) comprising an air electrode layer (14), a fuel electrode layer (13), and a solid electrolyte layer (16) interposed between said air electrode layer and said fuel electrode layer,

wherein said solid electrolyte layer (16) comprises a first electrolyte layer (16a) which is made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide and has a first ionic transference number and a first total electric conductivity, and a second electrolyte layer (16b) which is made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide and has a second ionic transference number smaller than said first ionic transference number and a second total electric conductivity larger than said first total electric conductivity;

said air electrode layer (14) is laminated onto said first electrolyte layer (16a) or said second electrolyte layer (16b); and

said fuel electrode layer (13) is laminated onto said first electrolyte layer (16a) or said second electrolyte layer (16b).

【Claim 2】 A solid oxide fuel cell according to claim 1, wherein said first and second electrolyte layers (16a and 16b) are made of a compound represented by



wherein A is one or more kinds of Sr, Ca, and Ba;

B is one or more kinds of Mg, Al, and In;

a is in the range from 0.05 to 0.3;

b is in the range from 0 to 0.3;

c is in the range from 0 to 0.2; and

(b+c) is in the range from 0.025 to 0.3; and

an amount of Co in said first electrolyte layer (16a) is  $0 \% \leq \text{Co} \leq 80 \%$  of an amount of Co in said second electrolyte layer (16b).

【Claim 3】 A solid oxide fuel cell according to claim 2, wherein a thickness of said solid electrolyte layer (16) comprising said first and second electrolyte layers (16a and 16b) is in a range from 1 to 500  $\mu\text{m}$ ; and

a percentage of said thickness of said first electrolyte layer (16a) with respect to the thickness of said solid electrolyte layer (16) is in a range from 1 to 20 %.

**【Claim 4】** A solid oxide fuel cell according to claim 2 or 3, wherein an amount of Co decreases gradually from said second electrolyte layer (16b) to said first electrolyte layer (16a) in the vicinity of the interface between said first electrolyte layer (16a) and said second electrolyte layer (16b).

**【Detailed Explanation of Invention】**

**【0001】**

**【Field of the Invention】**

The present invention relates to a solid oxide fuel cell (SOFC) comprising a solid electrolyte layer placed between an air electrode layer and a fuel electrode layer, and is also called a solid electrolyte type fuel cell.

**【0002】**

**【Prior technology】**

A solid oxide fuel cell comprising a layered structure, in which a solid electrolyte layer composed of an oxide ion conductor is interposed between an air electrode and a fuel electrode layer, has been developed as a fuel cell for novel power generation. Solid oxide fuel cells are classified roughly into two types, such as a cylindrical type as shown in FIG. 9A and a planar type as shown in FIG. 9(b).

The cylindrical type cell shown in FIG. 9(a) comprises an isolated porous ceramic cylinder substrate 1, an air electrode layer 2, a solid electrolyte layer 3, and a fuel electrode layer 4. The air electrode layer 2, the solid electrolyte layer 3, and the fuel electrode layer 4 are adhered onto the outer surface of the isolated porous ceramic cylinder substrate 1, in turn, so as to be arranged concentrically with each other. A conductive inter connector 5, which is a terminal of the air electrode, is laminated onto the solid electrolyte layer 3 so as to connect with the air electrode layer 2 via the solid electrolyte layer 3 and so as not to contact the fuel electrode layer 4. These layers may be formed by spray coating method, electrochemical deposition method, or slip casting method, etc.

**【0003】**

The planar type cell shown in FIG. 9(b) comprises a solid electrolyte layer 3, an air electrode layer 2 laminated on one side of the solid electrolyte layer 3, and a fuel electrode layer 4 laminated on the other side of the solid electrolyte layer 3. The planar type cell is used by connecting another planar type cell via a dense inter connector 5

comprising gas channels on both sides. The planar type cell is formed by sintering a green sheet formed either by the doctor blade method, or extension method, or the like, thereby forming the solid electrolyte layer 3 which in turn coated by a slurry for the air electrode layer 2 on one side and a slurry for the fuel electrode layer 4 on the other side of the sheet. The final sintering can be done all together or in sequence. Moreover, the planar type cell can also be formed by preparing green sheets of the solid electrolyte layer 3, the air electrode layer 2 and the fuel electrode layer 4, superposing, and sintering them all together. Such a wet method must be low cost. Also, the spraying method or electrochemical deposition method can be used, similar to the case of the cylindrical type cell.

#### 【0004】

In these solid oxide fuel cells, oxygen is supplied to the air electrode layer side, and fuel gas ( $H_2$  and  $CO$ ) is supplied to the fuel electrode layer side. The air electrode layer 2 and the fuel electrode layer 4 are made of a porous material so as to allow gases to diffuse to the interface between the solid electrolyte layer 3 and the air electrode layer 2 or the fuel electrode layer 4. Oxygen supplied to the air electrode layer side passes through pores of the air electrode layer 2, and reaches in the vicinity of the interface between the air electrode layer 2 and the solid electrolyte layer 3. Then, the oxygen receives electrons from the air electrode layer 2, to be ionized, ( $O^{2-}$ ). The oxide ions diffuse toward the fuel electrode layer 4 through the solid electrolyte layer 3. When the oxide ions reach in the vicinity of the interface between the solid electrolyte layer 3 and the fuel electrode layer 4, the oxide ions react with the fuel gas, generate a reaction product ( $H_2O$  and  $CO_2$ ) and discharge electrons to the fuel electrode layer 4.

#### 【0005】

The solid electrolyte layer 3 functions as a partition wall to prevent direct contact between the fuel gas and air, while being a medium for conducting oxide ions. Therefore, the solid electrolyte layer 3 must have gas impermeability and a high density. Moreover, the solid electrolyte layer 3 must be made of a material which has a high oxide ionic conductivity, a high chemical stability under the oxidizing atmosphere at the air electrode side and the reducing atmosphere at the fuel electrode side, and a high degree of being thermally shock-proof. For example, yttria stabilized zirconia (YSZ) is generally used as the material for the solid electrolyte layer 3. However, the stabilized zirconia has a

problem of decreasing ionic conductivity when the temperature decreases. For example, the ionic conductivity of  $\text{Y}_2\text{O}_3$  stabilized zirconia is  $10^{-1}$  s/cm at 1,000°C, and is  $10^{-4}$  s/cm at 500°C. Therefore, a fuel cell comprising a solid electrolyte layer 3 made of such electrolyte material must be used at temperatures about 1,000°C, or at least 800°C. That is, the fuel cell must be used at high temperatures.

### 【0006】

Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. Hei 11-335164 discloses an oxide ionic conductor having a perovskite structure as a material which can solve such a problem. The oxide ionic conductor is represented by general formula:  $\text{Ln}_{1-x}\text{A}_x\text{Ga}_{1-y}\text{B1}_y\text{B2}_z\text{O}_3$ , wherein Ln indicates lanthanide rare-earth metals, A indicates alkaline earth metals, B1 indicates non-transition metals, and B2 indicates transition metals. Namely, the oxide ionic conductor is a multiple oxide of 5 components ( $\text{Ln} + \text{A} + \text{Ga} + \text{B1} + \text{B2}$ ) which is obtained by doping 3 kinds of elements, e.g. an alkaline earth metal (A), a non-transition metal (B1), and a transition metal (B2) into a lanthanide-gallate ( $\text{LnGaO}_3$ ), or 4 components ( $\text{Ln} + \text{A} + \text{Ga} + \text{B2}$ ) which is obtained by doping 2 kinds of elements, e.g. an alkaline earth metal (A) and a transition metal (B2) into a lanthanide-gallate ( $\text{LnGaO}_3$ ).

The relationship between the percentage of B2 which are transition metal elements doped in the B site, and the total electric conductivity and the ionic transference number, in 5 components multiple oxide ionic conductor (e.g.  $\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{Ga}_{0.8}\text{Mg}_{0.2}\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ ) is shown in FIG. 2. Total electric conductivity shown in FIG. 2 contains both the ionic and electronic conductivity. It is clear that this lanthanum-gallate oxide has a high oxide ionic conductivity for a wide range of temperatures, which is higher than that of stabilized zirconia, and also has high heat resistance. Furthermore, it is also confirmed that lanthanum-gallate oxide has a high ionic transference number at all oxygen partial pressures from the oxygen atmosphere to the hydrogen atmosphere. In other words, it is clear from FIG. 2 that the percentage of the oxide ionic conductivity with respect to the total electric conductivity is remarkably high in lanthanum-gallate oxide, which acts as an electronic-ionic mixed conductor. Therefore, the operating temperature limit of a solid oxide fuel cell, which is about 1,000°C in general, can be lowered by using lanthanum-gallate oxide for the solid electrolyte layer 3.

### 【0008】

In order to increase the efficiency of the fuel cell, it is necessary to prevent electrons, which were discharged in the fuel electrode by reacting oxide ions with the fuel, from returning to the air electrode layer through the solid electrolyte layer, and to catch the electrons securely in the fuel electrode. To achieve this, the ionic transference number of the solid electrolyte comprising the solid electrolyte layer should ideally be 1.0.

In other words, it is preferable that the total electric conductivity of the solid electrolyte is entirely due to the oxygen ions, and that the electronic conduction is not possible between the air electrode layer and the fuel electrode layer at all. In order to bring the ionic transference number of lanthanum-gallate oxide disclosed in the Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. Hei 11-335164 close to 1.0, an added amount of a transition metal ( $B_{2z}$ ), namely Co, is needed to cause a decrease, as shown in FIG. 2.

### 【0009】

#### 【The problems to be solved】

However, when the added amount of Co is small, the total electric conductivity is low and the performance of the fuel cell deteriorates.

When the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 3 significantly decreases, the total electric conductivity increases, and the problem may be solved. However, when the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 3 decreases, the partition wall function, which functions so as to prevent direct contact between the fuel gas and air, may be decreased. Therefore, there is a limit in the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer.

In consideration of the above-described problems with conventional technology, one of the objectives of the present invention is to provide a solid oxide fuel cell which has an improved efficiency achieved by a solid electrolyte layer having improved ionic conductivity, while maintaining the partition wall function.

### 【0010】

#### 【Means for solving the problems】

As shown in FIG. 1, the invention according to claim 1 is an improved solid oxide fuel cell 11 having a laminating structure in which a fuel electrode layer 16 is positioned between an air electrode layer 14 and a fuel electrode layer 13. The solid electrolyte layer 16 comprises a first electrolyte layer 16a which is made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide

with a first ionic transference number and a first total electric conductivity, and a second electrolyte layer 16b which is made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide with a second ionic transference number smaller than the first ionic transference number and a second total electric conductivity larger than the first total electric conductivity; the air electrode layer 14 is laminated onto one side of the first solid electrolyte layer 16a; and the fuel electrode layer 13 is laminated onto the second electrolyte layer 16b. Not shown in figures, the air electrode layer 14 may be formed on the second electrolyte layer 16b, and the fuel electrode layer 13 may be formed on the first electrolyte layer 16a.

#### 【0011】

In the solid oxide fuel cell of claim 1, since the solid electrolyte layer 16 made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide, the solid electrolyte layer 16, which has a total electric conductivity larger than that of the conventional solid electrolyte layer made of YSZ, can be obtained. In addition, in the solid oxide fuel cell of claim 1, the operating temperatures can be lower than the conventional ones. Moreover, oxide ions, which are ionized in the vicinity of the interface between the air electrode layer 14 and the solid electrolyte layer 16, move through the first electrolyte layer 16a and the second electrolyte layer 16b (or the second electrolyte layer 16b and the first electrolyte layer 16a). Then, the oxide ions reach the fuel electrode layer 13 and discharge electrons to the fuel electrode layer 13. A part of the discharged electrons flow through the fuel electrode layer 13, second electrolyte layer 16b (or the first electrolyte layer 16a) and reach the air electrode layer 14. Since the first electrolyte layer 16a (or the second electrolyte layer 16b) has a relatively high ion transference number, the total electric conductivity is extremely low. Due to this, it is very difficult for electrons to move from the fuel electrode layer 13 to the air electrode layer 14, via the solid electrolyte layer 16. As a result, the ionic conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is remarkably improved and the efficiency of the solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention can be improved.

#### 【0012】

The solid oxide fuel cell of claim 2 is a solid oxide fuel cell according to claim 1, wherein said first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are made of a compound represented by  $\text{La}_{1-a}\text{A}_a\text{Ga}_{1-(b+c)}\text{B}_b\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ ,

wherein A is one or more kinds of Sr, Ca, and Ba;

B is one or more kinds of Mg, Al, and In;

a is in the range from 0.05 to 0.3;  
b is in the range from 0 to 0.3;  
c is in the range from 0 to 0.2; and  
(b+c) is in the range from 0.025 to 0.3; and  
an amount of Co in said first electrolyte layer (16a) is  $0\% \leq \text{Co} \leq 80\%$  of an amount of Co in said second electrolyte layer (16b).

As shown in FIG. 2, the ionic transference number (the percentage of the ionic conductivity with respect to the total electric conductivity) of the lanthanum-gallate oxide depend on the c value. In other words, it is clear from FIG. 2 that when the c value decreases, the ionic transference number increases. In contrast, when c in the formula is large, the total electric conductivity is large but the ionic transference number is small. In the invention of claim 2, the first electrolyte layer 16a having the ionic transference number larger than that of the second electrolyte layer 16b can be easily formed by adjusting the amount of Co of the first electrolyte layer 16a to be less than the amount of Co of the second electrolyte layer 16b.

#### 【0013】

The solid oxide fuel cell of claim 3 is a solid oxide fuel cell according to claim 2, wherein the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 comprising the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b is in a range from 1 to 500  $\mu\text{m}$ , and the percentage of the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a with respect to the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is in a range from 1 to 20%. In the solid oxide fuel cell of claim 2, since the amount of Co in the first electrolyte layer 16a is less than that in the second electrolyte layer 16b, the ionic transference number of the first electrolyte layer 16a is larger than that of the second electrolyte layer 16b. Therefore, the total electric conductivity becomes less than that of the second electrolyte layer 16b. In the solid oxide fuel cell of claim 3, the percentage of the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a is in a range from 1 to 20% with respect to the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16. That is, the percentage of the first electrolyte layer 16a with respect to the solid electrolyte layer 16 is remarkably low. Due to this, the total electric conductivity of the first electrolyte layer 16a is enhanced. Therefore, the total electric conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 comprising the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b can be optimized. In addition, both the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b act as a

partition wall, which prevents direct contact between the fuel gas and air; therefore, the partition wall function of the solid electrolyte layer 16 would not be lost even when the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a decreases.

#### 【0014】

The percentage of the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a with respect to the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is preferably in a range from 3 to 10%. The thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 comprising the first and second electrolyte layers 6a and 16b is preferably in a range from 5 to 100  $\mu\text{m}$ . When the percentage of the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a with respect to the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is less than 1 %, pin-holes may be generated in the first electrolyte layer. In contrast, if it exceeds 20 %, the total electrical conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 decreases. When the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is less than 1  $\mu\text{m}$ , the partition wall function may be lost. In contrast, when it exceeds 500  $\mu\text{m}$ , the total electric conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 decreases; therefore, the efficiency of the solid oxide fuel cell also decreases.

#### 【0015】

The solid oxide fuel cell of claim 4 is a solid oxide fuel cell according to claim 2 or claim 3, wherein said amount of Co decreases gradually from the second electrolyte layer 16b to the first electrolyte layer 16a in the vicinity of the interface between said first electrolyte layer 16a and said second electrolyte layer 16b. In the solid oxide fuel cell of claim 4, since the first electrolyte layer 16a and the second electrolyte layer 16b can be formed simultaneously, the solid electrolyte layer 16 can be produced easily with low cost, compared with the method in which the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are made separately, and then laminated. Moreover, the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b can be produced simultaneously by placing an alumina setter onto a green sheet having one composition when the green sheet is sintered.

#### 【0016】

##### 【Preferred embodiments】

In the following section, embodiments of a solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention will be explained referring to the figures. As shown in FIG. 1, a solid oxide fuel cell 11 comprises a fuel electrode layer 13 which is in contact with the fuel gas e.g. hydrogen, an air electrode layer 14 which is made of a porous material in contact with air,

and a solid electrolyte layer 16 which is interposed between the fuel electrode layer 13 and the air electrode layer 14. In the solid oxide fuel cell 11, the solid electrolyte layer 16 is sandwiched by the fuel electrode layer 13 and the air electrode layer 14. When hydrogen is allowed to flow so as to contact with the fuel electrode layer 13, air is allowed to flow so as to contact with the air electrode layer 14, and the fuel electrode layer 13 and the air electrode layer 14 is electrically connected, hydrogen becomes fuel and air becomes oxidant, that is, the fuel electrode layer 13 becomes a negative electrode and the air electrode layer 14 becomes a positive electrode. Thereby electric current flows between these electrodes, which are not shown in figures.

#### 【0017】

Moreover, the solid electrolyte layer 16 further comprises a first electrolyte layer 16a and a second electrolyte layer 16b. These first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide. The solid electrolyte layer 16 is formed by laminating the first electrolyte layer 16a with the second electrolyte layer 16b, which are produced separately. However, the solid electrolyte layer 16 can also be produced by partially removing Co from the surface layer of a precursor of the solid electrolyte layer 16. The first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are simultaneously produced by this method. In addition, the solid electrolyte layer 16 can be produced easily, and cheaply, compared to the above method in which the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are produced separately, and then laminated.

#### 【0018】

The first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are made of lanthanum-gallate oxide represented by a general formula (1):  $\text{La}_{1-a}\text{A}_a\text{Ga}_{1-(b+c)}\text{B}_b\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ .

In the general formula (1), A is one or more kinds of Sr, Ca, and Ba; and B is one or more kinds of Mg, Al, and In. In other words, the solid electrolyte layer 16 is made of a lanthanide gallate oxide which is a multiple oxide of 5 elements ( $\text{Ln} + \text{A} + \text{Ga} + \text{B} + \text{Co}$ ) obtained by doping 3 kinds of elements containing an alkaline earth metal (A), a non-transition metal (B), and a transition metal (Co) into a lanthanide-gallate ( $\text{LnGaO}_{3-d}$ ).

#### 【0019】

Moreover, the lanthanum-gallate oxide represented by the general formula (1) has a perovskite crystal structure, which is represented by  $\text{ABO}_{3-d}$ , and the A site is occupied by Ln element and the A element, and the B site is occupied by Ga element, B element

and Co element. In general, the A site and the B site are occupied with trivalent metals.

However, when the A and B sites are occupied with a divalent metal (for example, the A element of the A site and the B element of the B site) and a transition metal (for example, Co of the B site), oxygen vacancies are generated. The oxide ionic conductivity is generated due to the oxygen vacancies. Therefore, oxygen atoms decrease in proportion to the number of oxygen vacancies.

#### 【0020】

In the general formula (1), a indicates the percentage of the A element and should be in the range from 0.05 to 0.3, and preferably in a range from 0.10 to 0.25; b indicates the percentage of the B element and should be in the range from 0 to 0.3, and preferably in a range from 0.05 to 0.2; c indicates the percentage of Co and is in a range from 0 to 0.2, and preferably in a range from 0.03 to 0.1; and (b+c) is in a range from 0.025 to 0.30, and preferably in a range from 0.10 to 0.25. When a is out of the above range, the total electric conductivity decreases. When c increases, the total electric conductivity increases, but the ionic transference number (the percentage of oxide ionic conductivity), decreases. Therefore, c should preferably be in the above given range. When (b+c) increases, the total electric conductivity increases, but the ionic transference number decreases; therefore, (b+c) should preferably be in the above given range.

#### 【0021】

In the general formula (1), the A element is preferably Sr, and the B element is preferably Mg. Moreover, the atom ratio of oxygen is 3 in general formula (1). However, when a is not 0, oxygen vacancies are generated. Therefore, the atom ratio of oxygen is practically less than 3. The number of oxygen vacancies vary depending on the variations A and B elements, the preparation conditions, etc.. For convenience, the atom ratio of oxygen is shown as 3 in the general formula (1). The lanthanum-gallate oxide represented by general formula (1) is chemically stable under oxidizing atmosphere and reducing atmosphere at high temperatures, and the electric conductivity does not remarkably change. Therefore, the lanthanum-gallate oxide represented by the general formula (1) is suitable for the material of the solid electrolyte layer 16 of the solid oxide fuel cell 11. In addition, the electric conductivity of the lanthanum-gallate oxide represented by the general formula (1) is higher than that of YSZ at all temperatures. For example, the fuel cell comprising the solid electrolyte layer made of YSZ cannot be

operated at 600 to 800°C, because the electric conductivity of YSZ is low. In contrast, the fuel cell comprising the solid electrolyte layer 16 made of the lanthanum-gallate oxide represented by the general formula (1) can be used sufficiently at such temperatures. Of course, the fuel cell is stable and can be operated at high temperatures greater than 1,000°C.

### 【0022】

As shown in FIG. 2, the total electric conductivity of the material represented by general formula (1) increases in proportion to the c value which is the atom ratio of Co. This is due to Co being a transition metal. That is, when the valence of Co varies, an n or p type electronic conduction is generated. Therefore, when a larger amount of Co is introduced to the material represented by the general formula (1), the electronic conductivity increases, and thereby the total electric conductivity also increases. However, the percentage of the oxide ionic conductivity with respect to the total electric conductivity, decreases. Namely, the percentage of the oxide ionic conductivity (the ionic transference number) decreases. Concretely, the ionic transference number of the 5 component multi oxide having a c value being 0.15 or less is 0.7 or greater. In particular, when the c value is 0.10 or less, the ionic transference number is 0.9 or greater. Moreover, when a certain amount of the B element being a non-transition metal does not exist in the B site, it is impossible to reduce the percentage of the electronic conductivity with respect to the total electric conductivity to 0.3 or less.

### 【0023】

In contrast, when the c value is more than 0.15, the ionic transference number is small, 0.7 or less, and the lanthanum-gallate oxide functions as an electron-ion multi conductor. It should be noticed that a 4 components multi oxide, in which Mg being the B element is entirely substituted for Co, has an ionic transference number of only about 0.3; however, it functions sufficiently as an electron-ion multi conductor (an oxide ionic mixed conductor); therefore, it has the highest electric conductivity.

The first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are made of the lanthanum-gallate oxide represented by the general formula (1). However, the amount of Co in the first electrolyte layer 16a is less than that in the second electrolyte layer 16b. The ionic transference number of the first electrolyte layer 16a is larger than that of the second electrolyte layer 16b. Moreover, the total electric conductivity of the second

electrolyte layer 16b is larger than that of the first electrolyte layer 16a. The solid electrolyte layer 16 is made by laminating the first electrolyte layer 16a and the second electrolyte layer 16b.

#### 【0024】

The first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b may be formed by thermo-compression bonding green sheets of the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b and sintering. Moreover, the solid electrolyte layer 16 can also be produced by laminating the first electrolyte layer 16a on the second electrolyte layer 16b (the second electrolyte layer 16b on the first electrolyte layer 16a) in a slurry coating method or a screen printing method, followed by sintering. The method in which the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b sintered together is preferable simply, because the number of sintering steps is fewer. The first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b can be produced by either a compression molding method, or a hydrostatic molding method, or a casting method, instead of the doctor blade method. In addition, the first or second electrolyte layer 16a or 16b can be directly formed onto the second or first electrolyte layer 16b or 16a by a slurry coating method, a doctor blade coating method, etc. Furthermore, the first or second electrolyte layer 16a or 16b can also be directly formed onto the sintered second or first electrolyte layer 16b or 16a by a slurry coating method, a screen printing method, a spraying method, etc.

#### 【0025】

In addition to these methods, the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b can be produced by arranging an alumina setter onto a green sheet having one chemical composition when the green sheet is sintered. When the alumina setter is arranged onto the green sheet, and the alumina setter and the green sheet are sintered, Co in the green sheet diffuses towards the alumina setter. Thereby, an upper layer of the green sheet containing a small amount of Co becomes the first electrolyte layer 16a, and the remainder of the green sheet becomes the second electrolyte layer 16b. Moreover, the amount of Co in the first electrolyte layer 16a and the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a can be adjusted by changing the sintering temperature or the sintering time.

#### 【0026】

After sintering, the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a is in a range from 1 to 20% with respect to the thickness of the second electrolyte layer 16b. The thickness

of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is in a range from 1 to 500  $\mu\text{m}$ . After that, the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are integrated by an appropriate heat treatment. The heat treatment conditions are not limited; however, the heat treatment temperature is preferably in a range from 1,100 to 1,500°C. When the heat treatment temperature is in the above given range, the treatment time may be in a range from 1 to 100 hours. The heat treatment is sufficiently carried out in air, but can also be carried out in an inert gas atmosphere. The solid oxide fuel cell 11 is produced by laminating the air electrode layer 14 onto the first electrolyte layer 16a, and laminating the fuel electrode layer 13 onto the second electrolyte layer 16b. When the air electrode layer 14 is laminated onto the second electrolyte layer 16b and the fuel electrode layer 13 is laminated onto the first electrolyte layer 16a, the solid oxide fuel cell, which is not shown in the figures, can also be formed. These solid oxide fuel cells also have an excellent power generation characteristic.

#### 【0027】

Below, the functions of the solid oxide fuel cell 11 formed by the above-mentioned methods are explained. Oxygen supplied in the air electrode layer 14 flows through the pores in the air electrode layer 14, and reaches in the vicinity of the interface between the air electrode layer 14 and the solid electrolyte layer 16. Then, the oxygen receives electrons from the air electrode layer 14, to be ionized to  $\text{O}^{2-}$ . The oxide ions diffuse from the first electrolyte layer 16a toward the fuel electrode layer 13 through the solid electrolyte layer 16. Moreover, the amount of the first electrolyte layer 16a is small and the ionic transference number is relatively high. Therefore, the total electric conductivity of the first electrolyte layer 16a is smaller than that of the second electrolyte layer 16b. However, the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a is very small, specifically it is in a range from 1 to 20 % with respect to the thickness of the second electrolyte layer 16b. Therefore, since the percentage of the total electric conductivity of the first electrolyte layer 16a with respect to the total electric conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is extremely low, decrease of the total electric conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is prevented and the total electric conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is relatively high. Thereby, the oxide ions can travel in the first electrolyte layer 16a toward the second electrolyte layer 16b.

#### 【0028】

Then, the oxide ions pass through the second electrolyte layer 16b from the first electrolyte layer 16a. The second electrolyte layer 16b contains more Co than the first electrolyte layer 16a, and the total electric conductivity of the second electrolyte layer 16b is larger than that of the first electrolyte layer 16a. Therefore, although the second electrolyte layer 16b is thick, the oxide ions diffuse through the second electrolyte layer 16b and relatively easily reach in the vicinity of the interface between the fuel electrode layer 13 and the second electrolyte layer 16b. Then, the oxide ions react with the fuel gas, generate a reaction product, such as H<sub>2</sub>O and CO<sub>2</sub>, and discharge electrons to the fuel electrode layer 4. The discharged electrons flow between the fuel electrode layer 13 and the air electrode layer 14 as an electric current. Thereby, the fuel cell 11 acts as an electric power generator. Moreover, the total electric conductivity of the second electrolyte layer 16b is large; therefore, a portion of the electrons, which are discharged in the fuel electrode layer 13, try to return to the second electrolyte layer 16b and travel toward the air electrode layer 14. However, the thin first electrolyte layer 16a is positioned between the second electrolyte layer 16b and the air electrode layer 14. As explained above, the first electrolyte layer 16a contains a small amount of Co and the ionic transference number is relatively high; therefore, the electronic conductivity is extremely small. Therefore, the electrons can hardly travel in the first electrolyte layer 16a. Then, the electrons travel in the solid electrolyte layer 16 toward the fuel electrode layer 13 again, and finally reach the fuel electrode layer 13. After that, the electrons flow between the fuel electrode layer 13 and the air electrode layer 14 as an electric current, as the same way explained earlier.

#### 【0029】

Next, the solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention will be explained referring to the following Examples and Comparative Examples.

##### (Example 1)

The fuel cell 11 as shown in FIG. 1, was prepared by laminating the fuel electrode layer 13 having a diameter of 75 mm and a thickness of 60  $\mu\text{m}$ , the solid electrolyte layer 16 having a diameter of 75 mm and a thickness of 100  $\mu\text{m}$ , and the air electrode layer 14 having a diameter of 75 mm and a thickness of 40  $\mu\text{m}$ . The air electrode layer 14 was made of an oxide ionic mixed conductor represented by Sm<sub>0.5</sub>Sr<sub>0.5</sub>CoO<sub>3-d</sub>. The fuel electrode layer 13 was made of a mixture containing Ni and a compound represented by

$\text{Ce}_{0.8}\text{Sm}_{0.2}\text{O}_2$ . The first electrolyte layer 16a was made of a compound represented by  $\text{La}_{0.75}\text{Sr}_{0.15}\text{Ga}_{0.775}\text{Mg}_{0.125}\text{Co}_{0.1}\text{O}_{3-d}$ . The second electrolyte layer 16b was made of an oxide ionic mixed conductor represented by  $\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{Ga}_{0.8}\text{Mg}_{0.15}\text{Co}_{0.05}\text{O}_{3-d}$ .

### 【0030】

The solid electrolyte layer 16 was formed by the following steps. First, oxide powder materials were mixed to obtain the above compositions of the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b. Then, the oxide mixtures were pre-sintered in a range from 900 to 1,200°C. Slurries were prepared by crushing the obtained pre-sintered products by a ball mill, and adding binders and solvents to them. Laminated green sheets of the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b were produced simultaneously by coating the slurries by a doctor blade method. Then, the green sheets were sufficiently dried in air, and sintered in a range from 1,300 to 1,500°C. Thereby, the solid electrolyte layer 16 was produced. The thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 was 100  $\mu\text{m}$ . The thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a was 5  $\mu\text{m}$ , and is 5 % with respect to the thickness of the second electrolyte layer 16b. The fuel cell 11 was formed by sintering the fuel electrode layer 13 onto the second electrolyte layer 16b in a range from 1,000 to 1,200°C, and sintering the air electrode layer 14 onto the first electrolyte layer 16a in a range from 800 to 1,100°C.

### 【0031】

(Example 2)

The first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b were produced by coating the alumina setter on a green sheet having the composition represented by  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Ga}_{0.8}\text{Mg}_{0.12}\text{Co}_{0.08}\text{O}_{3-d}$  and sintering. The first electrolyte layer 16a, which contains small amount of Co, was formed at the surface layer of the green sheet, which was coated with the alumina setter. The remainder of the green sheet was the second electrolyte layer 16b. The thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 comprising the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b was 100  $\mu\text{m}$ . The fuel cell 11 was formed using the solid electrolyte layer 16, similar to Example 1. The quantity of the elements in the solid electrolyte layer 16 of the fuel cells formed in this Example were analyzed by the Electron Probe Microanalysis (EPMA) method. The results are shown in Table 1. Moreover, "d" in Table 1 indicates the depth from the surface of the solid electrolyte layer 16, which was coated with the alumina setter. As shown in Table 1, the first electrolyte

layer 16a having a thickness of 15  $\mu\text{m}$  was formed in the upper surface of the solid electrolyte layer 16. The remainder of the solid electrolyte layer 16 was the second electrolyte layer 16b.

### 【0032】

【Table 1】

Element	Depth from the surface of the solid electrolyte layer ( $\mu\text{m}$ )						
	5	10	15	25	50	70	95
La	0.902	0.901	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900
Sr	0.098	0.099	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100
Ga	0.824	0.822	0.820	0.812	0.800	0.800	0.800
Mg	0.144	0.142	0.142	0.132	0.122	0.120	0.120
Co	0.032	0.036	0.038	0.066	0.078	0.080	0.080
	First electrolyte layer			Second electrolyte layer			

In Table 1, the units of the percentage content are atomic %; La + Sr = 1.0, and

$$\text{Ga} + \text{Mg} + \text{Co} = 1.0$$

### 【0033】

(Example 3)

A fuel cell 11 was produced in a manner identical to that of Example 1, except the fuel electrode layer 13 was sintered onto the first electrolyte layer 16a at 1,000 to 1,200°C, and the air electrode layer 14 was sintered onto the second electrolyte layer 16b at 800 to 1,100°C.

### 【0034】

(Comparative Example 1)

A comparative fuel cell was produced in a manner identical to that of Example 1, except the first electrolyte layer 16a was not formed. Moreover, the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer, which corresponds to the second electrolyte layer 16b, was 100  $\mu\text{m}$ , similar to the Example 1.

(Comparative Example 2)

A comparative fuel cell was produced in a manner identical to that of Example 1, except the second electrolyte layer 16b was not formed. Moreover, the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer, which corresponds to the first electrolyte layer 16a, was 100  $\mu\text{m}$ , similar to Example 1.

(Comparative Example 3)

A comparative fuel cell was produced in a manner identical to that of Example 1, provided that the solid electrolyte layer 16 was made of YSZ. Moreover, the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer made of YSZ was 100  $\mu\text{m}$ , similar to Example 1.

(Performance Test)

The power generation characteristics of the fuel cells produced in Examples 1 to 3 and Comparative Examples 1 to 3 were examined at 650°C by using hydrogen gas as fuel and air as oxidizing agent and by adjusting the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer to 100  $\mu\text{m}$ . The results of Examples 1 to 3 are shown in FIGS. 3 to 5, and the results of Comparative Examples 1 to 3 are shown in FIGS. 6 to 8.

**[0035]**

(Evaluation)

The power generation characteristics of the fuel cell comprising the solid electrolyte layer made of YSZ in Comparative Example 3 (FIG. 8) was extremely lower than that of the fuel cells comprising the solid electrolyte layer made of lanthanum-gallate oxide in Examples 1 to 3 (FIGS. 3 to 5) and Comparative Examples 1 and 2 (FIGS. 6 and 7). It is considered that this was caused by the fact that the ionic transference number of the lanthanum-gallate oxide is larger than that of YSZ at low temperatures. Moreover, the performance of the fuel cells produced in Comparative Examples 1 and 2, which comprise the solid electrolyte layer 16 made of the lanthanum-gallate oxide, is inferior to that of the fuel cells produced in Examples 1 to 3. This may be caused due to the decrease of the total electric conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 itself in the fuel cell produced in Comparative Example 2. In the fuel cell produced in Comparative Example 1, the percentage of the ionic conductivity with respect to the total electric conductivity is small, therefore, the generation performance is inferior to that of the fuel cells produced in Examples 1 to 3. It is clear from the tests that the fuel cells produced as in Examples 1 to 3 have a total electric conductivity and a higher ratio of ionic conductivity to total electric conductivity, which are higher than those of conventional fuel cells comprising a solid electrolyte layer made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide having single composition; therefore, the efficiency of the fuel cells produced in Examples 1 to 3 is superior to that of conventional fuel cells.

**[0036]**

**【Effects】**

In solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention, the solid electrolyte layer comprises the first electrolyte layer, which is made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide and which has an ionic transference number larger than that of the second electrolyte layer, and a second electrolyte layer which is made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide and which has a total electric conductivity larger than that of the first electrolyte layer. Therefore, the solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention has a total electric conductivity larger than that of the conventional solid electrolyte layer made of YSZ. Therefore, as for the solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention, the operating temperatures can be lower than the conventional ones. Moreover, an ion movement from the fuel electrode layer to the air electrode layer 14, via the second electrolyte layer 16b, is prevented by the first electrolyte layer 16a. As a result, the ionic conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 can be remarkably improved.

**【0037】**

In addition, since the first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are made of a compound represented by  $\text{La}_{1-a}\text{A}_a\text{Ga}_{1-(b+c)}\text{B}_b\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ , and an amount of Co in the first electrolyte layer 16a is less than an amount of Co in the second electrolyte layer 16b, the first electrolyte layer 16a having an ionic transference number which is larger than that of the second electrolyte layer 16b can be easily and certainly formed. In addition, when the percentage of the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a with respect to the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is in a range from 1 to 20 %, since the percentage of the thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a with respect to the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is small, the total electric conductivity of the first electrolyte layer 16a is enhanced. Due to this, the total electric conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer comprising the first and second electrolyte layers can be maintained in a high level. As a result, the ionic conductivity of the solid electrolyte layer 16 can be remarkably improved, without decrease of functions as a partition wall and the efficiency of the solid oxide fuel cell of the present invention can be improved.

**【Brief description of the drawings】**

**【Figure 1】** FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional sketch of the solid oxide fuel cell representing the present invention.

**【Figure 2】** FIG. 2 is a graph showing the relationship between the concentration of

transition metal, the total electric conductivity, and the ionic transference number, in 5 component multi oxide.

【Figure 3】 FIG. 3 is a graph showing the power generation characteristics of the fuel cell given in the Example 1 of the present invention.

【Figure 4】 FIG. 4 is a graph showing the power generation characteristics of the fuel cell given in the Example 2 of the present invention.

【Figure 5】 FIG. 5 is a graph showing the power generation characteristics of the fuel cell given in the Example 3 of the present invention.

【Figure 6】 FIG. 6 is a graph showing the power generation characteristics of the fuel cell given in the Comparative Example 1.

【Figure 7】 FIG. 7 is a graph showing the power generation characteristics of the fuel cell given in the Comparative Example 2.

【Figure 8】 FIG. 8 is a graph showing the power generation characteristics of the fuel cell given in the Comparative Example 3.

【Figure 9】 FIG. 9A is a perspective view showing a cylindrical solid oxide fuel cell.

FIG. 9B is a perspective expanded view showing a planar solid oxide fuel cell.

【Explanation of Reference Symbol】

- 11 solid oxide fuel cell
- 13 fuel electrode layer
- 14 air electrode layer
- 16 solid electrolyte layer
- 16a first electrolyte layer
- 16b second electrolyte layer

**【Document Name】 Abstract**

**【Abstract】**

**【Object of the Invention】** The present invention provide a solid oxide fuel cell which has an improved efficiency with a solid electrolyte layer having an improved ionic conductivity, while maintaining the partition wall function

**【Composition】** A solid oxide fuel cell 11 comprising an air electrode layer 14, a fuel electrode layer 13, and a solid electrolyte layer 16 interposed between the air electrode layer 14 and the fuel electrode layer 13. The solid electrolyte layer 16 comprises a first electrolyte layer 16a, which is made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide and has an ionic transference number lager than an ionic transference number of a second electrolyte layer, and the second electrolyte layer 16b, which is made of a lanthanum-gallate oxide and has a total electric conductivity larger than that of the first electrolyte layer 16a. The air electrode layer 14 is laminated onto the first electrolyte layer 16a. The fuel electrode layer 14 is laminated onto the second solid electrolyte layer 16b. The first and second electrolyte layers 16a and 16b are made of a compound represented by  $\text{La}_{1-a}\text{A}_a\text{Ga}_{1-(b+c)}\text{B}_b\text{Co}_c\text{O}_3$ . The amount of Co in the first electrolyte layer 16a is less than an amount of Co in the second electrolyte layer 16b. The thickness of the first electrolyte layer 16a with respect to the thickness of the solid electrolyte layer 16 is in a range from 1 to 20 %.

**【Selected Figure】 FIG. 1**



Fig. 1

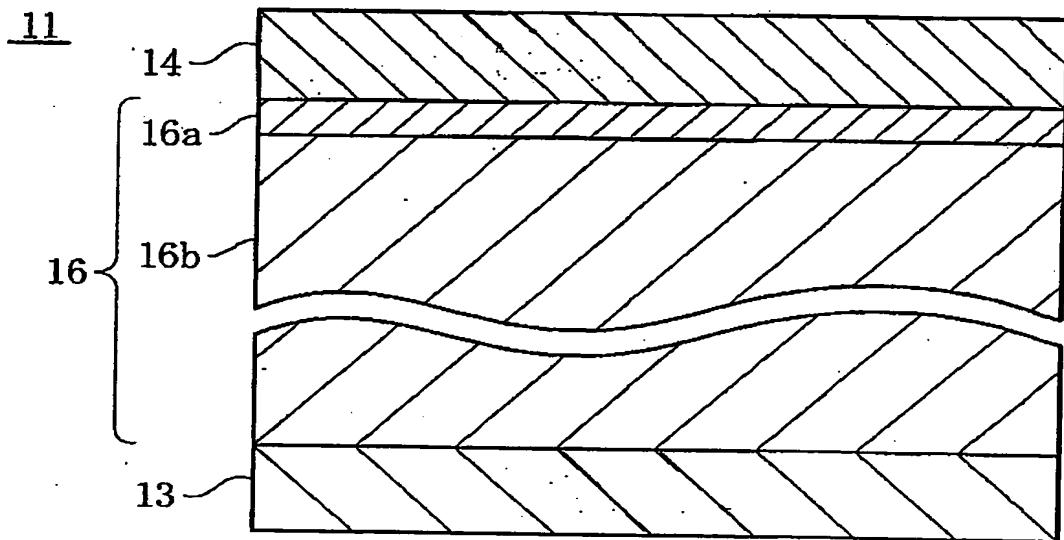
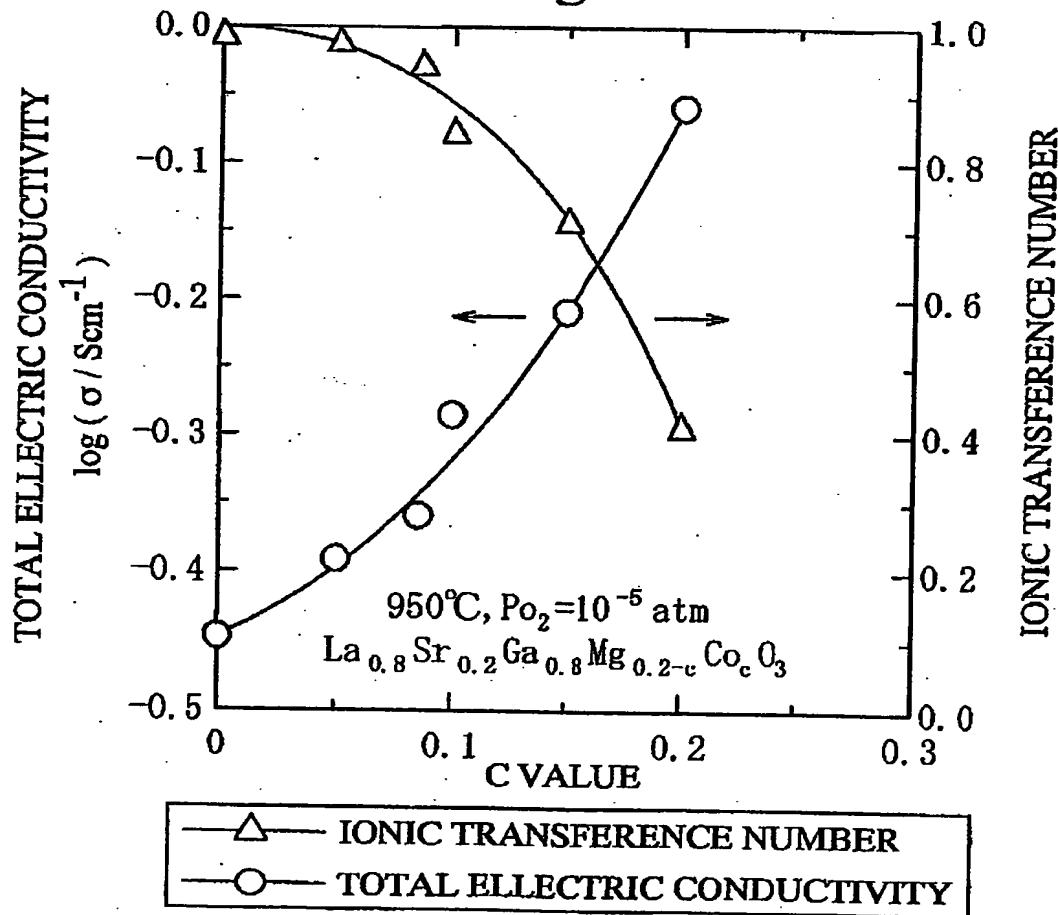
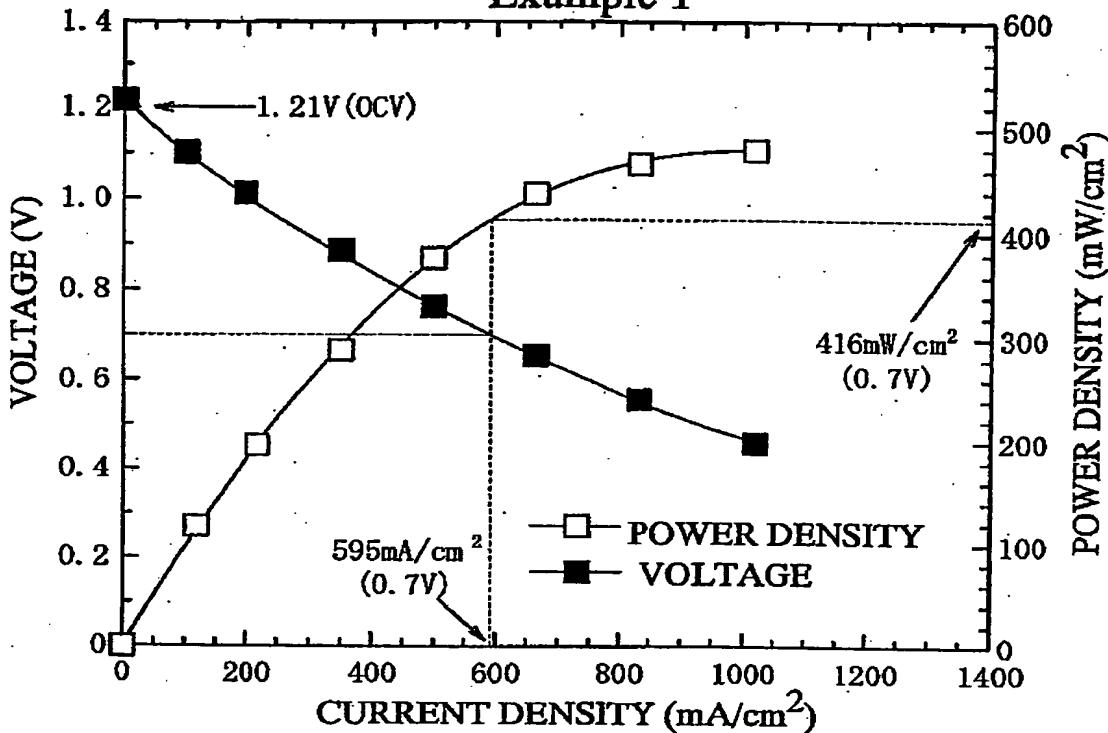


Fig. 2

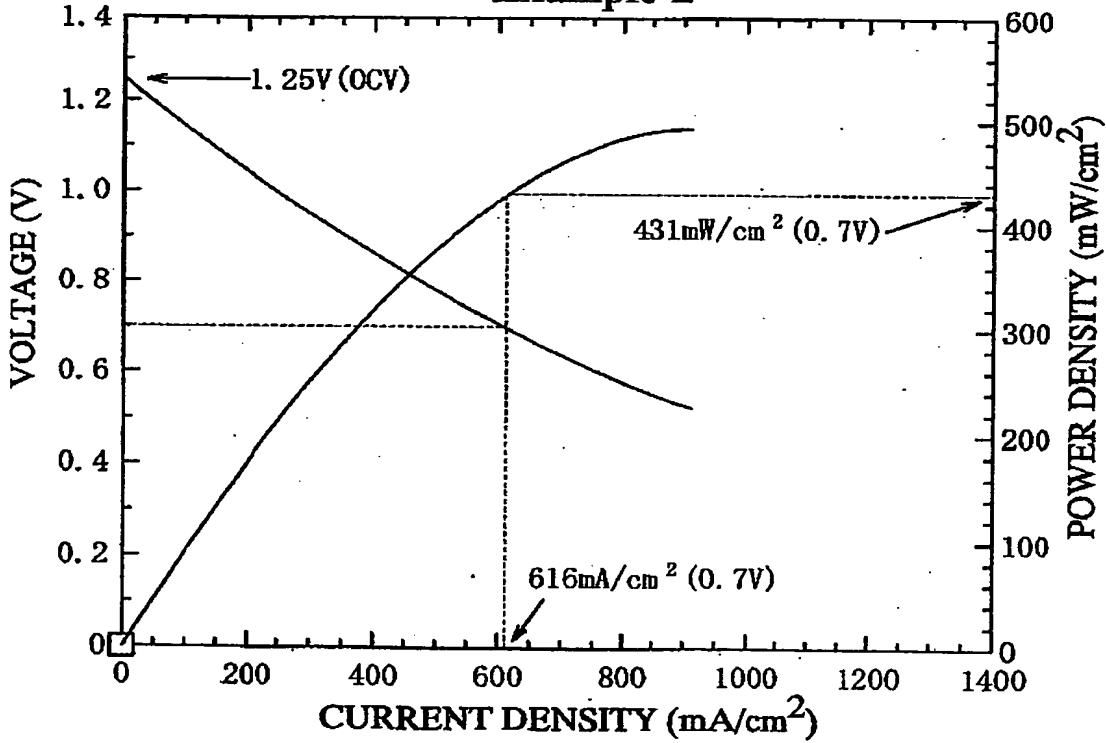




**Fig. 3**  
**Example 1**

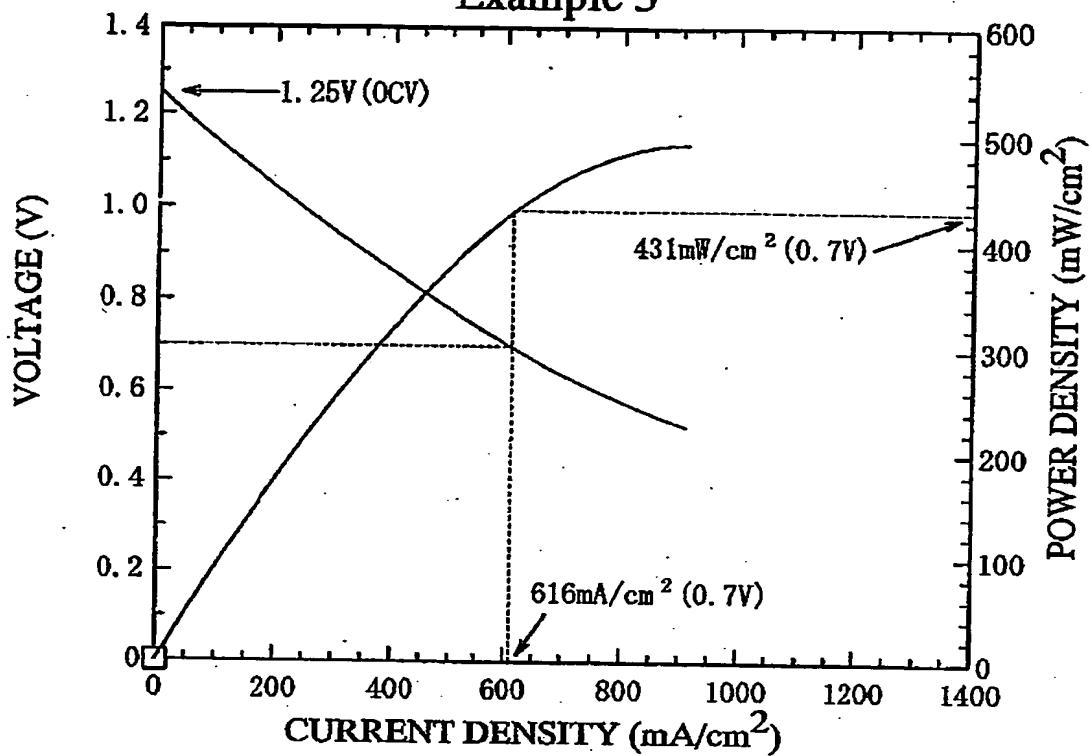


**Fig. 4**  
**Example 2**

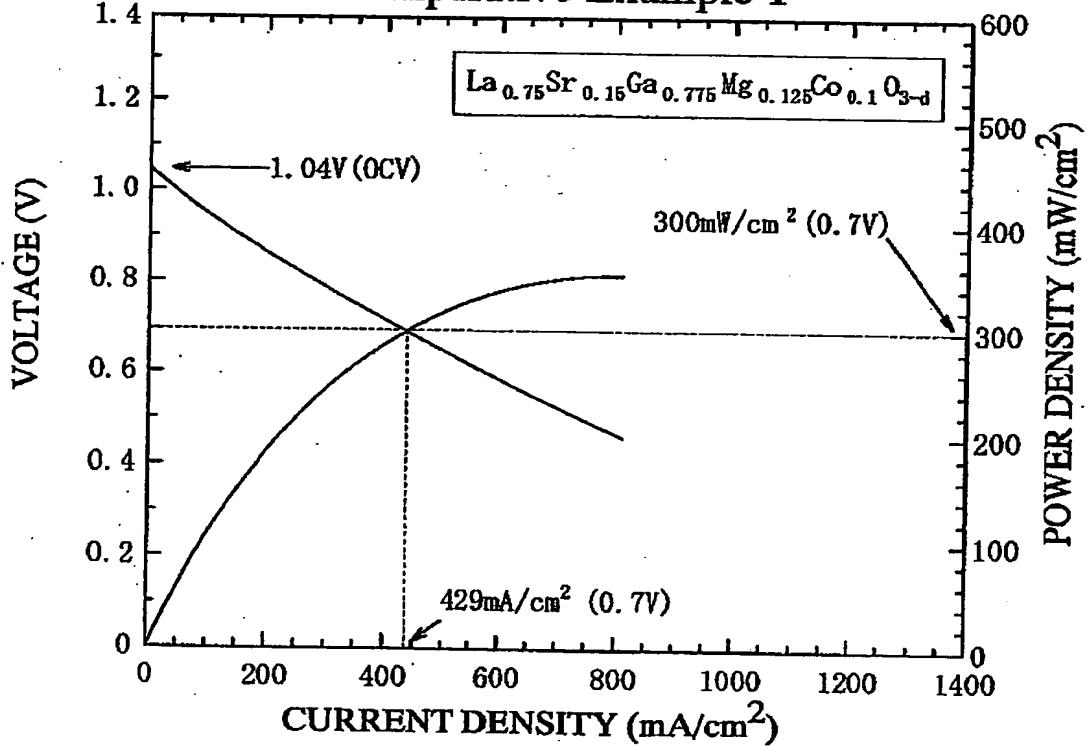




**Fig. 5**  
**Example 3**

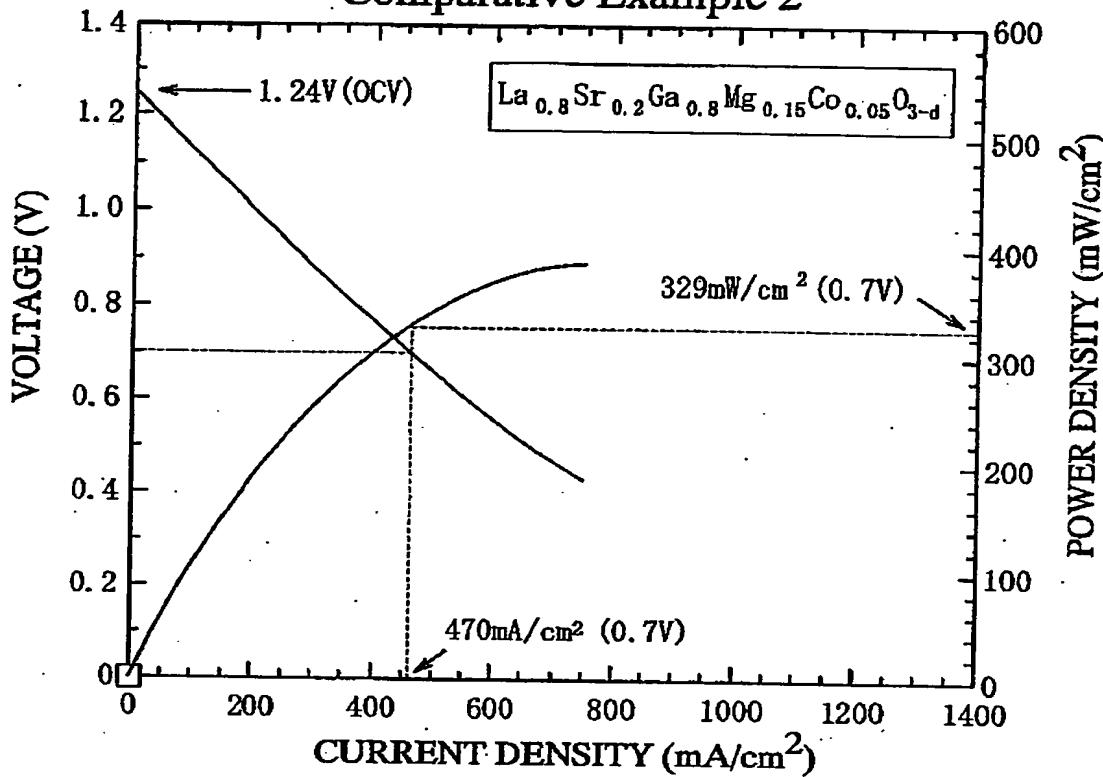


**Fig. 6**  
**Comparative Example 1**





**Fig. 7**  
Comparative Example 2



**Fig. 8**  
Comparative Example 3

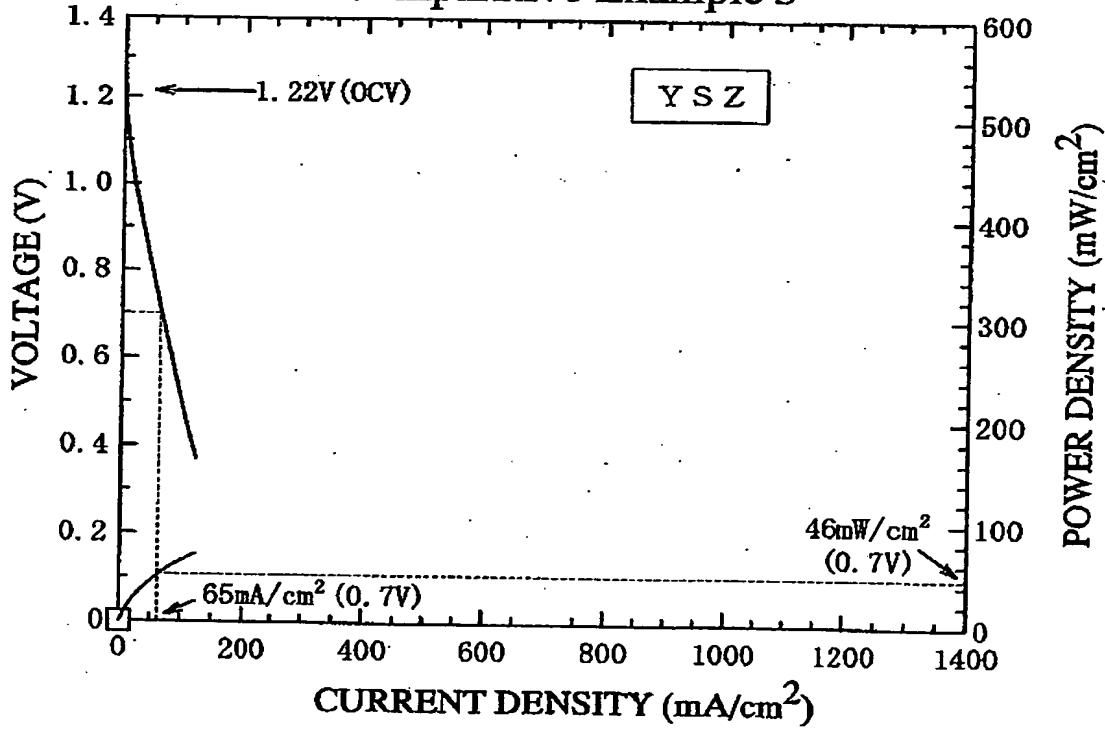




Fig. 9A

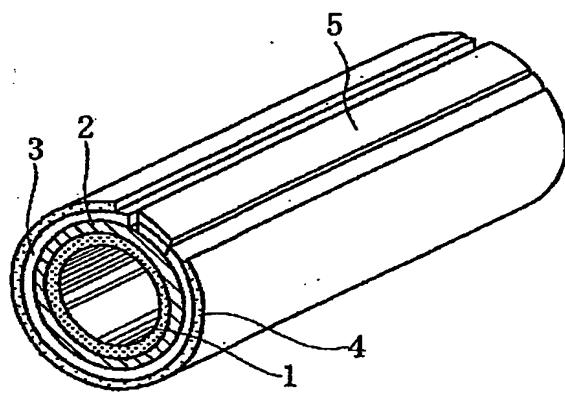
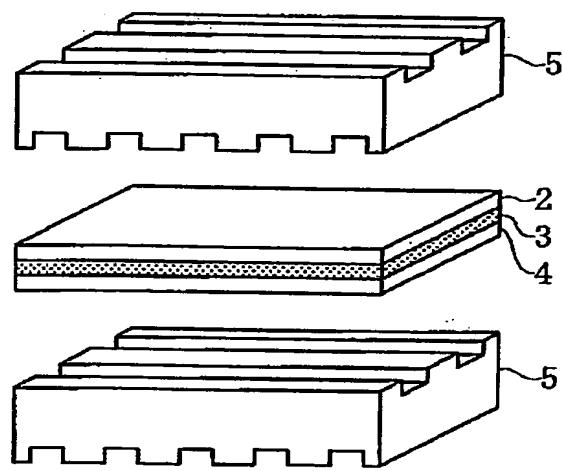


Fig. 9B





Docket No.:SHG-0047  
(PATENT)

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Patent Application of:  
Jun Akikusa et al.

Application No.: 09/891,501

Art Unit: 1745  
Examiner: R. Alejandro

Filed: June 27, 2001

For: SOLID OXIDE FUEL CELL

DECLARATION UNDER 37 C.F.R. 1.132

Commissioner for Patents  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

I, Jun Akikusa, being duly warned, hereby declare and say:

1. I received a B.S. in Industrial Chemistry from Science Technology Department of Nihon University in 1991. I received a Ph.D in Chemistry from Chemistry Department, Duquesne University in 1996.
2. I have presently employed as a Research Scientist at R&D projects and have been employed since January 1, 1998 by Mitsubishi Materials Corporation of Tokyo, Japan.
3. I am one of the inventors of the present invention and am familiar with the technology involving the present patent application, and have thoroughly reviewed the application as well as the alleged new matter rejections applied by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.
4. From my analysis, the expression "0 or 80% or less than" is an obvious error that should have recited as "0 to 80%". According to Table 1 of the specification, the amount of Co in the first electrolyte layer is 0.106 atomic percent ( $0.032 + 0.036 + 0.038$ ), and the Co amount in the second electrolyte layer is 0.304 atomic percent ( $0.66 + 0.078 + 0.080 + 0.080$ ). That is, the percentage of the Co amount (0.106 atomic percent) in the first electrolyte layer with respect to the Co amount (0.304 atomic percent) in the second electrolyte layer is 34.9 %, which is within the range 0 to 80%.

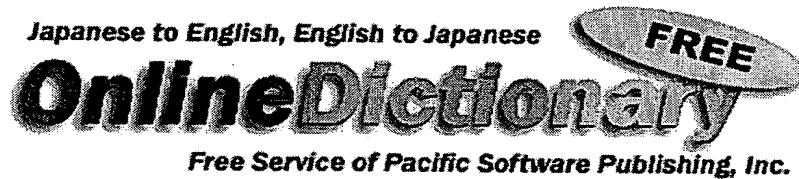
5. Additionally, claim 2 and various places of the specification recite that "an amount of Co in said first electrolyte layer is 0 or 80% or less with respect to an amount of Co in said second electrolyte layer." The phrase "0 or 80% or less" can only mean "0 to 80%;" it cannot mean "0 or less with respect to" or "80% or less with respect to," because the content of Co cannot be negative. The expression "0 or 80% or less than" is an obvious error for "0 or 80% or less with respect to."

6. Accordingly, it is my belief that one of skill in the art would recognize that "0 or 80% or less than" is understood, in view of the specification, to mean that an amount of Co in said first electrolyte layer is  $0\% \leq Co \leq 80\%$ , or 0 to 80%, with respect to an amount of Co in said second electrolyte layer, and that this is an obvious error and is therefore not new matter.

I further declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further, that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent resulting therefrom.

May 11, 2004  
Date

Jun Akikusa  
(Mr. Jun Akikusa)



**Input English or Japanese Word:**

Word 1	Word 2	Description
いか	以下	less than/up to/below/under/and downward/not exceeding/the following/the rest

[Fc] 18504528

LE FastCounter  
Since April 2, 1998

[PSPINC Privacy Statement](#)

Copyright © 2005 Pacific Software Publishing, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

ジルコニアより高い酸化物イオン伝導性を示し、耐熱性が高く、高温はもちろん、温度が低下しても酸化物イオン伝導性が高く、更に酸素雰囲気から水素雰囲気までのあらゆる酸素分圧で（即ち、酸素分圧が低くとも）イオン輸率の低下が小さく、酸化物イオン伝導が支配的であるか、又は混合イオン伝導性を示すことが確認されている。このため、このランタンガレート系酸化物を固体電解質層として使用することにより、通常1000°Cの固体酸化物型燃料電池の作動温度を低下させることが期待されている。

【0008】ここで、燃料電池をその効率の面から着目すると、酸化物イオンが燃料ガスと反応することにより燃料極に放出された電子が、固体電解質を伝導して空気極層側に戻ることを防止して燃料極に確実に残存させる必要がある。このためには、固体電解質のイオン輸率は1.0であることが理想的である。即ち、固体電解質における全伝導度が全て酸素イオンの伝導によるものであり、空気極層と燃料極層の間に電子の伝導が全くない状態であることが好ましい。特開平11-335164号公報に示されたランタンガレート系酸化物においてイオン輸率を1.0に近づけるには、図2の内容から遷移金属(B<sub>2z</sub>)、即ちC<sub>o</sub>の添加量(c値)を減少させることが必要である。

#### 【0009】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】しかし、特開平11-335164号公報に示されたランタンガレート系酸化物において、イオン輸率を1.0に近づけるために遷移金属のC<sub>o</sub>の添加量(c値)を減少させると、図2に示すように、イオン伝導と電子伝導を含めた全伝導度自体が減少し、燃料電池の性能自体が低下する不具合がある。この点を解消するために、固体電解質層の厚さを極力薄くしてその全伝導度を高めることが考えられるが、厚さ自体を薄くすると、燃料ガスと空気を直接接触させないための隔壁としての機能を損なうおそれがあるため、その薄型化には限界があった。本発明の目的は、固体電解質層の隔壁としての機能を損なうことなくそのイオン伝導度を高めて効率を向上し得る固体酸化物型燃料電池を提供することにある。

#### 【0010】

【課題を解決するための手段】請求項1に係る発明は、図1に示すように、空気極層14と燃料極層13の間に固体電解質層16が配された積層構造を有する固体酸化物燃料電池11の改良である。その特徴ある構成は、固体電解質層16はランタンガレート系酸化物からなりかつ第1イオン輸率及び第1導電率を有する第1電解質層16aとランタンガレート系酸化物からなりかつ第1イオン輸率より低い第2イオン輸率及び第1導電率より高い第2導電率を有する第2電解質層16bとが隣接して形成され、空気極層14が第1電解質層16aに積層され、燃料極層13が第2電解質層16bに積層されたところにある。なお、図示しないが、空気極層14を第2電解質層16bに積層し、燃料極層13を第1電解質層16aに積層してもよい。

【0011】請求項1に係る発明では、固体電解質層16をランタンガレート系酸化物により形成するので、従来のYSZからなる固体電解質層と比較して高い全電気伝導度を有する固体電解質層16を得るとともに、固体酸化物型燃料電池の作動温度を従来より低下させる。また、空気極層14と固体電解質層16との界面近傍でイオン化された酸化物イオンは、第1電解質層16a側（又は第2電解質層16b側）から第2電解質層16b（又は第1電解質層16a）に移動して燃料極層13に到達して電子を放出する。放出された電子の一部は燃料極層13からこの第2電解質層16b（又は第1電解質層16a）に戻り空気極層14側に移動する。一方、第1電解質層16a（又は第2電解質層16b）はイオン輸率を比較的高くしていることから電子伝導度は極めて低い。このため電子が燃料極層13から固体電解質層16を通過して空気極層14に移動することは極めて困難となる。この結果、固体電解質層16全体におけるイオン伝導度は著しく向上して固体酸化物燃料電池の効率は向上する。

【0012】請求項2に係る発明は、請求項1に係る発明であって、第1及び第2電解質層16a, 16bがL<sub>a</sub>A<sub>b</sub>G<sub>c</sub>O<sub>1-(b+c)</sub>B<sub>b</sub>C<sub>o</sub>O<sub>3</sub>で示される材料からそれぞれ構成され、かつ第1電解質層16aのコバルト添加量が零であるか又は第2電解質層16bのコバルト添加量の80%以下である固体酸化物型燃料電池である。但し、式中AはSr, Ca, Baの1種もしくは2種以上の元素であり、BはMg, Al, Inの1種もしくは2種以上の元素であり、aは0.05~0.3であり、bは0~0.3であり、cは0~0.2であり、(b+c)は0.025~0.3である。図2に示すように、ランタンガレート系酸化物のイオン輸率(電気伝導に占めるイオン性伝導の割合)は特にc値により変動し、c値が低ければイオン輸率は向上する。一方、上式でc値が大きければ、導電性が高いが、イオン輸率は低くなる。この請求項2に係る発明では、第1電解質層16aのコバルト添加量を第2電解質層16b

Co salt addition amount is 0

80% of 16b or less